



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140

July 28, 2008

Reply To: EPTA – 088

Ref: 07-036-AFS

Rick Brazell, Forest Supervisor
Colville National Forest
765 S. Main
Colville, WA 99114

Dear Mr. Brazell:

The EPA has reviewed the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the **Excess Residence Sale** (CEQ No. 20080228) at the Republic Ranger Station of Colville National Forest in Ferry County, WA. Our review was conducted in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309 directs EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions. Under our policies and procedures, we also evaluate the document's adequacy in meeting NEPA requirements.

The draft EIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed sale of a 0.72 acre parcel of land with a one and a half story wood frame residential building that was built in 1936. The Forest Service (FS) no longer needs the parcel and building to meet its mission requirements and public service. The sale of the building and associated property would also be consistent with FS Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005.

Before the proposed sale can be implemented, FS developed and analyzed two alternative actions, including a No Action. Under No Action, the parcel and residential building would remain under FS ownership and there would be no sale or transfer of the property. Under the Proposed Action and **Preferred Alternative**, the FS would sell the parcel and building located on the Republic Ranger District administrative compound, at the corner of Jefferson and Tessie Avenues in the City of Republic, Ferry County, WA.

In our scoping comments on the proposed project, EPA informed the FS of issues we recommended be analyzed during the EIS development for the project, including past and potential future use of the property, effects on historic and cultural resources, required consultations, and cumulative impacts. After analysis, archeological investigations found the property contains a deposit of prehistoric lithics material. Hazardous material surveys conducted in 2006 also found a small amount of asbestos and lead on the site, but at levels that present negligible health risks and, according to Washington State Department of Ecology, require no further remedial action (p. 22). Overall, the only significant concern with the sale of the proposed property is the uncertainty that, under non-federal ownership, the historical characteristics of the

property would be diminished or lost. However, the FS believes that this potential adverse impact would be offset by anticipated benefits from the sale of the property and proposed mitigation measures (p. 12). The proposed property sale would generate increased economic revenue for the FS and eliminate costs associated with maintaining, preserving and protecting the property.

We support the intended goals of the proposed property sale and appreciate the extent of public outreach undertaken during the EIS analysis. We are especially pleased with contacts and agreements reached between FS, Washington State Historic Preservation Office, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation to address the National Historic Preservation Act requirements and mitigation measures for adverse impacts to historic and cultural resources affected by the project. Your responses to our scoping comments also addressed our concerns.

Based on our review, we have assigned a rating of LO (Lack of Objections) to the draft EIS. This rating and a summary of our comments will be published in the *Federal Register*. A copy of the rating system used in conducting our review is enclosed for your reference.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft EIS. If you have questions about our comments, please feel free to contact Theo Mbabaliye (206) 553-6322 or me at (206) 553-1601.

Sincerely,

/s/

Christine Reichgott, Manager
NEPA Review Unit